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## Mapping Student Literacies: Reimagining College Writing Instruction within the Literacy Landscape

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**Abstract:** Through an examination of four current trends in composition instruction, this article presents a new lens for envisioning composition instruction that integrates the best aspects of the writing across the curriculum, genre-based curriculum approach, ecocomposition, and writing across communities theories of writing instruction. The "literacy landscape" proposed herein explicitly values the integration of student learning "incomes" within the composition classroom and derives from the author's experience teaching within a large composition program that employed aspects of the genre-based curriculum, and both WAC approaches. The literacy landscape is envisioned to act both as a lens for imagining a more comprehensive approach to administering composition programs, as well as to teaching composition.

In Fall 2009, I entered the Master's program in Rhetoric and Writing in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of New Mexico (UNM), supported by a teaching assistantship. I began the semester with a week of orientation to the banal aspects of the program, to the university and its students, and to the genre-based curriculum approach the writing program had adopted for first-year composition. Teaching assistants (TAs) varied in their appreciation of the program's curriculum, but on the whole it was implemented in our classrooms throughout the first semester, when all new TAs were enrolled together in a typical teaching practicum course, where we discussed our successes and failures, learned to develop and use rubrics, to conduct productive conferences, to work with multilingual writers, and to leave feedback on our students' papers, and learned the basic outlines of composition history (Rendleman). Occasionally, we discussed the challenges that our students faced as speakers of other languages, as students who worked and had families while attending school, or as students from historically marginalized communities struggling to find their voices and places within the university.

We did not, however, discuss ways to appreciate or meaningfully incorporate our students' challenges or life stories into our curriculum or their classroom experience. As a new instructor, I found this gap highly unsatisfying, and it seemed that little within the canon of composition history offered a resolution to help me address my students and their writing needs individually, with respect for their literacy histories and their lives outside the classroom. Thus, I attempted to resolve it in my own experience: I adopted a lens that over time I have come to call the "literacy landscape," as I tried to understand my students' prior experiences with writing and literacy, and to connect those experiences to the work that they did in my class, trying to make it relevant to their lives in other spheres.

The literacy landscape is so named because it requires the adoption of a spatial and material perspective into teaching composition. It encapsulates the belief that literacy, and literacy practices, are inherently tied to the material realities that define the lives of our students prior to and during their brief time in our classrooms (Fleckenstein; Reynolds; Villanueva). *Landscape*, in this case, necessarily includes the built and natural, and increasingly, cyber environments (*land*), through which

both we and our students pass on our daily journeys to and from the writing classroom, but it also encapsulates the kaleidoscope of cultural, social, economic, and historical perspectives that both we and our students hold. Hence, *landscape*, that is: land as it is seen and interpreted by people with varying points of view. Calling it the “*literacy landscape*” shifts the focus to relationships between literacies and the places—neighborhoods, workplaces, university campuses, reservations, pueblos, community centers, immigration offices, restaurants, classrooms, kitchen tables, etc.—in which they are normal, accepted, and expected, as well as to the uneven distribution of literacies throughout the places from which the writing program’s student population comes.

Although the term I am proposing is new, others within and outside of composition studies have already begun taking on the work it represents. For example, in the field of K-12 education, the concept of “funds of knowledge” (FoK) has motivated an approach to pedagogy that draws directly on the intellectual and practical “know-how” extant in minority students’ communities. *Funds of knowledge* “refer[s] to . . . historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge essential for household or individual functioning and wellbeing” (Moll *et al.* 133). Today, individual functioning and wellbeing for students increasingly requires the development of particular literacies and communication skills—for students in the classroom and, even more so, for those in the workforce.

In 2011, the “Job One Panel” of NBC’s *Education Nation* forum focused on “education and its place in employment and developing workers with the skill set to compete globally” (“Job One Panel”).[{1}](#) [\[#note1\]](#) While FoK-driven curricula are created with the awareness that students need to begin learning these skills and literacies in order to

gain better opportunities through schooling to improve their life chances in the capitalizing world as historically received, . . . [t]he primary impulse joins a pragmatic need to engage learners with, most importantly, an *ethical imperative* to honour [*sic*] their cultural-historical lives . . . through knowledge content (curriculum) and ways of transacting knowledge (pedagogy) that resonate meaningfully with cultural use-values in people’s lifeworlds. (Zipin *et al.* 181; emphasis added)

FoK approaches encourage teachers, sometimes paired with anthropologists (see Moll *et al.*), to investigate the lifeworlds—home lives and communities—of their students and to base their curriculum directly on the FoK available to students in those places. Knowing more about students’ FoK can not only help instructors design curricula that better engages and suits students, but can also help teachers understand why students may approach problems or instructional situations in ways that teachers find surprising or unfit when they draw on FoK that are not part of the classroom repertoire.[{2}](#) [\[#note2\]](#)

In composition studies, Eli Goldblatt’s *Because We Live Here* looks deeply into the literacy practices that surround Temple University and that affect writing instruction at the university itself. *Because We Live Here* is “about the rich regional context and institutional relationships that surround, stress, and sustain a multifaceted writing program in a state-affiliated metropolitan research university,” and Goldblatt remarks that he cannot “fictionalize the setting because the peculiarities of the local are too essential to literacy work” (8). As Goldblatt notes, “the more we know about where our students come from and what the literacy conditions are around our institution, the better chance we have of designing a program that truly fits our environment” (2). Designing a program that “truly fits” the environment of a particular writing program means turning the lens of the literacy landscape inward and making pedagogical changes based on a commitment to incorporating students’ lived literacy experiences—as well as their social, historical, economic, and cultural identities—into the classroom space.

Kristie Fleckenstein, in *Embodying Literacies: Imageword and a Poetics of Teaching*, reminds us that the places from which our students write, where their writing begins, are not necessarily compatible with the classroom setting or the ways in which we ask them to write. She argues:

Essential to any literate performance is feeling sufficiently at home in a place so that we will speak and write. When we enter the classroom, we carry a map—an interior image and internal geography—of our comfort zone in the world. If we are lucky, the academic place corresponds in essential ways to that inner geography, ensuring that the classroom is integrated into the intimate images of our safe areas. (62)

As teachers of composition, we know that often our students do not immediately feel “at home” in the classroom. Part of our mandate, as writing teachers, is to help our students begin to think of themselves as writers, to see writing as relevant to their lives, and to help them write effectively and authoritatively in spheres that are important to them personally, academically, and professionally, or as Charles Bazerman says, to “welcome strangers into the discursive landscapes we value.” As does Fleckenstein, Bazerman notes that “places that are familiar and important to us may not appear intelligible or hospitable to students we try to bring into our worlds. Students, bringing their own road maps of familiar communicative places and desires, would benefit from signs posted by those familiar with the new academic landscape” (qtd. in Bawarshi and Reiff 198). In other words, their FoK are not necessarily similar to our own, and while they may not be entirely equipped to make sense of the academic space, they *do* bring skills and knowledge that can be tapped as important learning resources. As we welcome students into the new landscape, it is imperative that we connect students’ home places to the classroom, so that the classroom becomes contiguous with other places of comfort and becomes a place where students feel invited and authorized to speak. We must help students see the continuity between their literacy landscape and that of higher education.

As composition studies moves toward theories, such as writing across communities as forwarded by Juan Guerra and Michelle Hall Kells, that overtly validate students’ “*learning incomes*”—i.e., what students bring with them when they come to school” (Guerra, “Cultivating Transcultural Citizenship: A Writing Across Communities Model” 296), the field needs a metaphorical framework that can integrate prior theories of writing instruction and that aids instructors and writing programs in integrating students’ learning incomes with classroom practice, while allowing a greater focus on the material realities of students’ lives outside the classroom. I argue that the application of a lens such as the literacy landscape can bring spatial and material concerns regarding literacy and composition to the forefront for instructors and writing programs alike, so that students’ lived experiences with language are productively incorporated into the space of academic writing instruction, helping students to re-imagine and take ownership over the place of that academic instruction within their lives.

This article thus follows writing across communities in forwarding a perspective of composition instruction that neither reinforces a damaging deficit model of writing instruction (Rose), nor relies solely upon the development and articulation of learning outcomes for determining programmatic and student success, but instead sees the composition classroom-space as one among many sites of learning, experience, and identity that students possess.[{3} | #note3](#)

## Composition and Place

This literacy landscape lens is a small part of a larger disciplinary shift that cultural geographer Edward Soja has called the “unprecedented spatial turn” in “the humanities and social sciences,” which “may in retrospect be seen as one of the most important intellectual developments in the late twentieth [and early twenty-first] century” (261). The cognizant spatial turn in rhetoric and

composition is now over a decade old, but the incorporation of spatial perspectives into the theories and practices of teaching composition is by no means settled. Nedra Reynolds's body of work probably represents the most comprehensive depiction of the field of composition studies through a spatial perspective. In her 1998 article, "Composition's Imagined Geographies: The Politics of Space in the Frontier, City, and Cyberspace," Reynolds notes that spatial metaphors have long been important in how the field of composition studies, its mission, and its place within academia are imagined. Crucially, she argues that certain metaphors of space that have come to define composition studies' view of itself, such as that of the frontier, have as often as not served to erase rather than highlight the material realities of teaching particular students under particular conditions. "Composition needs to develop," she writes, "ways to study space differently that might close the gap between imagined geographies and material conditions for writing" (30). Further, she claims:

[I]nstead of thinking bigger and wider, as composition has typically done—using large imagined geographies to situate and validate composition studies as a discipline—now it is time to think smaller and more locally. . . . [A] geographic emphasis would insist on more attention to the connection between spaces and practices, more effort to link the material conditions to the activities of particular spaces, whether those be campuses, classrooms, office, computer labs, distance-learning sites, or hotels. (30)

Likewise, Reynolds's 2004 *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference* argues compellingly for the inclusion of spatial and material perspectives into the field's understanding both of the teaching and production of writing:

[I]f we could discover more about how people learn about boundaries and borders, . . . then we could apply these findings to a richer understanding of how people learn to read, write, and interact with texts. Imagining acts of writing as material, carving text out of time and space, in particular circumstances that differ for each writer—opens up new spaces in which to study and understand literacy and the construction of meaning. (3-4)

Where Reynolds has drawn on cultural geographers to insist on connecting the material conditions of writing to composition studies' theoretical underpinnings, others have used spatial perspectives to problematize composition studies' reliance on its relationship to traditional rhetoric for academic legitimacy, drawing important conclusions about rhetoric and composition's inherent and problematic tendency to uphold existing structures of power and marginalization. In "ReComposing Space: Composition's Rhetorical Geography," Roberta Binkley and Marissa Smith argue that

if classical Athenian rhetorical principles continue to be reified as *the* rhetorical principles, then those whose spatial history and context are different from "mainstream" Western Eurocentric heritage will . . . continue to exist outside of, and to be excluded from, the physical, social and intellectual space ideologically created by the unproblematic origin narrative of Anglo-American rhetoric as it manifests in the teaching and practice of composition.

They note, "Composition has too often become the tool in American higher education used to deny entry to the university. . . . Access to the physical space of the university often hinges on a K-12 education geared toward college preparation. Certainly upper division standing in higher education is usually determined by composition skills." The university structure's propensity to reify the marginalization and oppression of some of its students is precisely why composition teachers—through whose classrooms most, if not all, students must pass—bear a responsibility to investigate and integrate into the classroom experience the social, cultural, intellectual, and rhetorical spaces from which their students come. This is especially important when those student populations include

individuals from historically and presently marginalized groups, whose access to the greater university community may already be jeopardized by their previous educational experiences.

These critiques of composition studies point in a critically important direction, “toward foregrounding the voices of teachers and students, and further toward locating these voices in culturally and institutionally specific scenes of learning” (Mortensen 207).[\[4\] \[#note4\]](#) Indeed, as a field, we not only “need a more comprehensive theoretical model of the postsecondary literacy environment” (Goldblatt 9), we need creative and productive ways of implementing it in classrooms and writing programs generally, and we need educators, administrators, and students all to take part in building it. To see how composition studies might adopt a literacy landscape perspective, and work toward accomplishing this at the institutional and classroom levels, it is worthwhile to review recent major trends in composition studies and writing instruction and to discuss the factors driving these changes.

## Trends in Current Models of Composition Instruction

In the face of changing student populations, combined with employers’ demands for increased literacy among the newest members of the workforce and the further recognition that many students enter the university because a university degree is increasingly necessary for employment in most job fields, composition programs have for decades been moving away from essayist approaches to writing instruction and toward approaches that privilege contextualized writing. The roots of the writing across the curriculum movement, as David Russell details in “American Origins of the Writing-across-the-Curriculum Movement,” lie in “the American tradition of progressive education” (151), and while WAC 1.0 (a term of Guerra’s that I will adopt henceforth) coalesced as a movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s, its origins go back to the late nineteenth century.

Russell paints the history of WAC 1.0 as a struggle between competing interests in higher education; on the one hand, “upholding disciplinary standards” through increasing “specialization of knowledge and of professional work,” and on the other, “promoting social equity” by integrating a growing (and diverse) “number of citizens into intellectually meaningful activity within mass society” (151).

Russell explains that WAC 1.0 programs, which have sought to involve disciplinary specialists in the teaching of writing, gained traction because they “acknowledged differences among disciplines and tried to understand them, without trying to dismiss or transcend them” (165), thus leaving in place knowledge specialization within the university setting, and in the process increasing the importance of composition studies. In fact, Russell claims, it is through WAC 1.0’s recognition of the “disciplinary organization of knowledge” that “WAC has been able to appeal to faculty members from many departments, whose primary loyalty and interest” lie within their own discipline (166). Writing across the curriculum as a framework for teaching writing has been an improvement over the essayist model that preceded it, not only because it recognizes that writing is an integral part of knowledge production within every discipline or because it involves instructors in other disciplines in the teaching of writing, but also because it is a model in which students’ use of writing to learn, as well as to demonstrate learning in courses across the disciplines, helps them to realize the necessity of writing throughout their academic careers.

These features of WAC 1.0 have given it “staying power” (Maimon vii) as an approach to teaching writing, and today writing across the curriculum programs have commonly become institutionalized in a number of forms, from writing-intensive disciplinary courses that count toward students’ university writing requirements to the writing in the disciplines approach of “linked” courses, in which students enroll in a disciplinary course and a writing course concurrently, and the writing course bases its assignments on the content students learn in the disciplinary course—thus taking a “writing to learn approach” (Guerra, “Cultivating Transcultural Citizenship: A Writing Across

Communities Model” 298; see also Russell, *Writing in the Academic Disciplines*). Indeed, WAC 1.0 has gained so much traction that “WAC is . . . sprawling, encompassing many—and, often, dissenting—voices within it. Some 2,400 articles and books on WAC have been published since 1975, with some 240 empirical studies” (Russell *et al.* 395-96).

Highly compatible with and often integrated into variations of the WAC 1.0 approach is the genre-based curriculum approach to (especially first-year) composition, such as was advocated at UNM. In some versions of this approach, students write their assignments toward the constraints of given rhetorical situations, which require a particular genre form. By the end of a semester or year of composition, students have become familiar with the conventions of several genres, as well as with the notions of writing for an audience with a particular purpose. In addition to exposing students to various types of writing and potential writing situations, the genre-based approach allows instructors to introduce rhetorical terms and concepts—such as audience, purpose, and the rhetorical appeals—to students, thus offering them a theoretical framework to use in order to understand both the creation and critique of texts.

Both of these approaches strive to teach students that writing is a process, that it must address particular constraints related to audience and rhetorical situation, and that writing is necessary in communicative contexts beyond the English departments in which composition courses are normally located. The WAC 1.0 approach, however, theoretically involves faculty and teachers across the disciplines in a university-wide effort to teach writing as a mode of inquiry, and in practice requires the alignment of learning outcomes and writing assessment tools, not to mention faculty and, for a truly integrated WAC 1.0 approach, administrators within many disciplines and departments. A genre-based curriculum approach, in contrast, may be undertaken by the faculty and teaching assistants within an English or composition department without the participation of disciplinary faculty, if English faculty commit to moving toward a model of writing instruction that engages students in imagining and writing for “audiences other than insider experts in English Studies” (Kells 92). Even though this approach can be contained, so to speak, within the English department, resistance to moving away from essayist discourse can be overwhelming if support for the genre-based curriculum model is not strong enough among faculty and administrators. As Kells notes, this approach, which foregrounds audiences other than English experts, “not only destabilizes how we teach first-year college students but challenges how we teach graduate teaching assistants charged with introducing novice writers to academic discourse” (92).

Indeed, many complications attend the genre-based approach to teaching first-year composition, which in large institutions is often taught by TAs who receive varied and uneven introduction to pedagogy theory and practice. For one, the genre-based approach is often very different from what these teachers themselves experienced, and it derives from the complexities of genre and rhetorical theory to which and in which not all new teaching assistants have access or interest. While the framework for the genre-based approach to teaching writing lies in the richness of genre theory (Devitt), and is informed by the notion that genres are not merely static forms but are social actions, as Carolyn Miller influentially argued, genres are most easily (if erroneously) understood by their forms and features, rather than by their social contexts.[{5} \[#note5\]](#) Genre-based curriculum approaches may fail to do what they intend, not because they lack theoretical depth or richness, but because it can be very difficult for teachers, especially those new to the idea of genres and rhetorical theory, and whose scholarly interests lie elsewhere, to articulate how something that looks like a concrete product—the genre—is actually a social process that both responds to and creates (or reinforces) historical, cultural, and social norms, as well as personal and institutional identities and ideologies. Compositionists have long struggled with the best ways to teach genres without reinforcing only their rhetorical features. Many of the genres taught even through a genre-based curriculum approach are watered-down versions of pre-delineated forms, usually taught out of context

(Devitt 340). Often, theorists advocate critical approaches with the hope that students learn to transfer their genre-reading and -critiquing skills to new genres and rhetorical situations, both within and beyond academia (Devitt; Bawarshi and Reiff 189-209).

Even those that campaign for a pedagogy based on genre recognize that “genre teaching can indeed be formulaic and constraining if genres are taught as forms without social or cultural meaning,” but argue that when genres are taught not as forms but as “part of a larger critical awareness” that a genre-based approach can be “enlightening and freeing” for students (Devitt 337). The key, then, is for instructors to integrate the critical social aspects of genres into their pedagogy. Indeed, one of the further difficulties with a genre-based approach, according to Amy Devitt is that

[w]hen writers take up a genre, they take up that genre’s ideology. . . . When teachers select genres to use in the classroom, then, they are selecting ideologies that those genres will instill in students, for good and bad. . . . The first and most important genre pedagogy, then, is the teacher’s genre awareness: the teacher being conscious of the genre decisions he or she makes and what those decisions will teach students. (339)

That teachers must become critically aware of the genres they teach in order to teach them to students responsibly means that writing programs bear responsibility for educating instructors not only in the basic outlines of genre and rhetorical theory, but also in methods for teaching and critically examining genres in ways that allow students to become conscientious consumers and users of them. Devitt’s thoughtful explication of how she teaches genre awareness to students in first-year composition and beyond, “Teaching Critical Genre Awareness,” shows the tremendous possibilities for moving genre beyond a focus on form and for encouraging students to rely on their prior experience with genres to help guide them through their new writing experiences. The focus on genre, though, by instructors who do not have such training, can be problematic. Students know that they are writing to the teacher for the purpose of a grade and that that grade may depend on meeting the prescribed genre features; they may internalize certain types of writing or writing moves without being aware of why these genre features are appropriate to particular contexts or of the ideologies those genres represent and reinforce.

Another model of composition instruction that challenges fossilized notions of hierarchy within the academy, promotes writing as a necessary and natural part of the process of inquiry of all disciplines, and encourages rhetorical awareness in writing is ecocomposition. Even more than genre-based and WAC 1.0 models, ecocomposition challenges academia’s understanding of the purpose and place of writing. Sidney Dobrin and Christian Weisser define ecocomposition as “the study of the relationships between environments . . . and discourse. . . . Ecocomposition draws primarily from disciplines that study discourse . . . and merges the perspectives of them with work in disciplines that examine environment” (*Natural Discourse* 6). As in a WAC 1.0 framework, ecocompositionists take for granted that writing (discourse) is integral to all disciplines. Specifically, “one of the most significant goals of ecocomposition is its desire to cross the boundaries between the two academic cultures of the humanities and the sciences, and, in the process, make the connections between the various tongues of each” (Dobrin and Weisser, *Natural Discourse* 4). With regard to the genre-based curriculum approach, ecocomposition also aims to help students understand that writing is transactional, but its methodology is different. Because ecocomposition is the study of relationships between environments and discourse, less emphasis is placed on the form of writing than on the interaction between situation (place) and text that arises out of or responds to it. Ecocomposition “cultivates a comprehensive awareness with which writers approach their craft, investigate their surroundings, sharpen their critical engagement with language, and shape rhetorical positions for themselves. . . . [It] helps to contextualize our written expression” (Hothem 35). Because writing is an ecological endeavor—that is, it is always and everywhere engaged in the production and maintenance of relationships (between

texts and environments, texts and people, people and people, people and environments, texts and other texts), ecocompositionists emphasize the need for students to read and produce texts that are relevant outside of the classroom.

As with the genre-based curriculum approach, the incorporation of rhetorical theory—emphasis especially on audience and purpose—is an important aspect of ecocomposition. Ecocompositionists suggest that teachers reconceive of what counts as public discourse—and think in terms of public writing that students *can* engage in—rather than using *published* writing, the academic standard, by which to judge or on which to model student texts. Teachers are encouraged not just to create rhetorical situations for their students to respond to classroom assignments but instead to extend the classroom to the world beyond, finding potential rhetorical situations for classroom writing through extant local and global issues, partly solving the problem of so-called classroom genres when students writes for audiences “other than their teachers” (Dobrin and Weisser, *Natural Discourse* 142). In this way, ecocomposition theoretically not only breaks down disciplinary barriers within academia but also between academia and the surrounding communities. Further, this emphasis on writing that students *can* engage in, *right now*, helps to destabilize the medical model that sees students as in need of remediation and their writing in need of fixing, before they can join in real conversations.

In calling for teachers to connect their pedagogical practice directly to the world outside the classroom, Dobrin and Weisser connect ecocomposition to “Paolo Freire’s dialogic methodology” or problem-posing approach, which “asks students to participate in conversations with both their environments and other members of their community or biosphere” (*Natural Discourse* 142). By referencing Freire’s pedagogy, and through their insistence that ecocomposition pedagogy ought to “urge students to look at their own discursive acts as being inherently ecological” (117), Dobrin and Weisser indicate a latent, and somewhat tentative, advocacy for the inclusion of students’ own, existing knowledge and experiences in the classroom. However, the articulated focus remains on what the outcomes and experiences of ecocomposition classes should be, rather than on incorporating the resources (to take a rather environmentally value-laden term) that students bring with them to the classroom in terms of their experiences and prior knowledge. Thus, the starting point for ecocomposition pedagogy appears to be the generic imagined student, rather than the particular ones that show up in first- year writing classrooms with diverse backgrounds.

A secondary complication with ecocomposition is that it remains in the eyes of many tied with a focus on nature and nature writing. Although “advocates of ecocomposition rightly warn against compromising writing instruction with literature appreciation or consciousness-raising, and especially against conflating ecocomposition with its apparent progenitor, ecocriticism,” students often “end up negotiating idealized literary landscapes” because the environment is perhaps most easily brought into the composition classroom through canonical texts of naturalism and nature writing—the supposedly pure and natural environments of which, while revered for their literary value and conservationist values—do not easily resonate with the experiences of most students who encounter these texts in college writing courses (Hothem 36). Nevertheless, ecocomposition is *not* about introducing nature into the classroom, and its focus on the place-based aspects of writing is ripe with possibilities for incorporating students’ lives outside the classroom into their classroom writing experiences.

Some scholars have begun to revise ecocomposition in such a way that they do seek to incorporate students’ lived experiences. Thomas Hothem, for instance, proposes that “an ecocompositional turn to suburban studies can . . . recoup seemingly irreconcilable differences between nature and culture in writing instruction by making everyday life a subject of serious inquiry and promoting a general environmental awareness in student writing” (37). In “Suburban Studies and College Writing: Applying Ecocomposition,” Hothem writes of focusing a freshman writing course on studying and writing about suburbia, the environment from which most of his students came. He argues that

“treating students’ personal experience as an object of knowledge encourages them to explore implications for critical perspective and self-fashioning in the writing” (37). Hothem’s turn away from an “ecological” or “natural” study of environment, and toward the lived experiences of his students, is a move befitting the lens of the literacy landscape. Rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all attitude toward ecocomposition or place-based pedagogy, Hothem notes that

it is useful to begin the course by determining the class demographic with respect to students’ geographic backgrounds, commonalities, and differences. . . . The more our inquiries reflect students’ lives, the more forthcoming they are with their ideas, the more included they feel in the production of knowledge, and the more comfortable they are with exploring their positions as writers and thinkers. (41-42)

Calling students’ ideas and experiences *knowledge*, including them in academic and critical work, and valuing the places that they come from are ideas inherently destabilizing to the hierarchical and exclusionary structures within the academy that rhetoric and composition are so often complicit in reifying (Binkley and Smith). In this destabilizing endeavor to move away from the generic student and toward the particular ones, Hothem is not alone.

What is missing from WAC 1.0, the genre-based curriculum approach, and from the theoretical articulation of ecocomposition—that is, the overt validation of the students’ prior identities, language and educational experiences, as well as their social and cultural knowledge—is explicitly addressed by the writing across communities model (dubbed WAC 2.0 by Guerra), which emerges from the writing across the curriculum movement and draws heavily on ecocomposition to stake its claims in composition theory. Kells and others—like Victor Villanueva, who has called traditional WAC 1.0 models “assimilationist” (166)—“contend that traditional models of WAC too narrowly privilege academic discourse over other discourses and communities shaping the worlds in which our students live and work” (Kells 93). To move away from models of composition that reinforce the separation between academic inquiry and the other worlds in which students move daily, Kells advocates a “cultural ecology model” that values writing for its role in creating and sustaining relationships in and beyond the academy. Like ecocomposition, and especially Hothem’s take on it, WAC 2.0 seeks to disrupt barriers and hierarchies that separate academia from students’ other lives and identities. Kells goes beyond ecocomposition’s ecological model in her articulation of the need to “connect students’ home communities to college literacy education . . . [and to consider] the range of rhetorical resources influencing students’ lives in and beyond the academy” (90). Unlike an ecocomposition approach, which foregrounds students’ development of their understanding of their own and others’ relationships to environments and one another, the WAC 2.0 approach seeks to foreground “the dimensions of cultural and sociolinguistic diversity in university-wide writing instruction” (90).

Because of its insistence on the inclusion of students’ learning incomes, the WAC 2.0 approach is compatible with and encourages pedagogical innovations such as those described by Hothem as well as Kim Brian Lovejoy, Steve Fox, and Katherine Wills, who argue in “From Language Experience to Classroom Practice: Affirming Linguistic Diversity in Writing Pedagogy” that today’s composition classroom is so linguistically and culturally diverse that teachers must derive ways to productively address and incorporate the language varieties that students bring with them into the classroom. Lovejoy remarks that while “learning the conventions of academic writing is important and necessary . . . students should also learn the importance of their own language, or get to experience what they already know and can do with language” (264). Students are “more likely to succeed in learning more formal varieties if they can build on what they already know and do as language users” (281).

The authors offer a variety of practical suggestions, drawn from their own classrooms (and their own language and literacy experiences) about how to create a classroom space that validates students' home literacies and linguistic resources. In particular, Fox shows that incorporating students' home literacies and language experiences into the classroom is not only compatible with, but also generally enhanced by a kind of genre-based approach to writing. Fox describes "multigenre writing" projects, in which students use "a collage of different genres, including dialogue, e-mail, letters, brochures, personal essays, news articles, feature captions, speeches, recipes, instructions, profiles, and song lyrics. Some of these genres allow and in fact invite familiar, colloquial, and creative uses of language" (277). As with the genre-based and ecocomposition approaches, "writers must think about their audience and purpose" (277), but they are encouraged to choose the genres themselves and to draw extensively on their multiple and various languages, and in so doing, gain a critical understanding of language varieties. Similarly, Nancy Mack, who contends that "the skills of most concern in the university setting to working-class students are their writing skills," also uses a multi-genre project. Rather than focusing so closely on the genre aspects, however, Mack is more concerned with giving "students the discursive space to construct a powerful academic identity that legitimates and ethically represents their multiple identities" (61). Thus her assignment, which is rooted in an ethnographic study of a community of each student's choice, "focuses on the conflicts among academic, working-class, and other identities [that] may further students' developing critical consciousness" (61).

Because WAC 2.0 is interested in the creation of relationships through writing as well as in the overt validation of students' learning incomes—including their linguistic and experiential FoK, a WAC 2.0 approach could potentially bring together critical language pedagogies such as those described by Lovejoy, Fox, and Wills, the identity-conscious approach that Mack takes, and genre-based approaches to writing with ecocomposition's focus on the environment (natural, constructed, social, cultural), especially as Hothem has revised it. Guerra and Kells, who together are at the forefront of advocating the WAC 2.0 approach nationally, have provided a rich theoretical framework on which to structure both writing programs and classroom instruction, drawing on resources in genre theory, education, social science, cultural studies, ecocomposition, and rhetoric and composition. But they have not yet provided a model of their theory that teachers and students, faculty and administrators can embrace and then put into practice. The lens of literacy landscape I have proposed can serve as this bridge between rich theory and informed practice. I believe it is the visualization of students' literacies and lives that best encompasses the WAC 2.0 approach to writing instruction and writing development.

## Sharpening the Lens: Literacy Landscapes in Action

In some ways, the literacy landscape metaphor, and its features and goals—to look at the complexities of interactions and relationships between and among urban and rural communities, minority/majority populations, poverty-stricken and historically underrepresented populations, institutions of higher learning, public and private schools, civic services, etc., and to then use this information to inform and shape curricular decisions—could be accounted for by an ecosystem model, the kind that might be posited through ecocomposition. The ecosystem lens would meet many of the needs of the literacy landscape—local environments, cultures, social dynamics, economies, programs and institutions could be taken into account, and relationships among these factors and players could be envisioned through an ecological model that looks at historical and contemporary causes, effects, hierarchies, and complex interdependencies among myriad actors and institutions. Dobrin and Weisser do in fact approach this kind of literacy ecosystem, saying that "ecocomposition continues the post-process move to understand relationships between writers and larger systems [of gender, culture, race, class, and ideology] by taking into consideration the role of environment, place, nature, and location in those larger systems, examining the relationships between discourse and place" ("Breaking Ground"

575). Nevertheless, an ecosystem model, with all the complexities that it could describe, does not do what I believe the literacy landscape can to reinvigorate our teaching of composition through a place-based, writing across communities framework.

Primarily, the problem with an ecosystem lens is that to describe discourse in ecological terms, Dobrin and Weisser turn to the metaphors offered by applying Darwin's theory of evolution. For example, they claim that

a writer can no more easily escape the discourse community in which he or she operates than an animal or plant can escape its own particular ecosphere. . . . Much like the finches and tortoises in Darwin's theory of evolution, writers enter into particular environments with a certain ideological code and then contend with their environments as best those codes allow. . . . Much as in genetic evolution, writers display certain characteristics in their writing that are determined by the environments in which they write. Just as a genotype offers a set of genetic instructions that are manifested through a phenotype, or an expression of those instructions, so too does an ideology offer a set of ideological instructions that are manifested in the use of discourse. ("Breaking Ground" 576)

While I agree with Dobrin and Weisser that "compositionists therefore can learn much about discourse and writing by turning to theories of ecology" (576), the ecological model they construct by relying on a Darwinian view of evolution is overly deterministic and lacks the flexibility to incorporate writers' understandings of their own environments, relationships, or uses of multiple discourses. This budding ecosystem lens reflects the lack of an explicit attempt to give voice and validation to students' prior experiences—a problem with WAC 1.0 and the genre-based curriculum approach, as well. It overtly discounts the choices that an individual person, when faced with the constraints of different rhetorical, social, economic, and personal circumstances, can make to change him or herself, to adapt, both consciously and unconsciously. Furthermore, an ecosystem, in scientific discourse, is described and modeled through a scientist's view of organisms' behaviors and relationships, and the understanding is posited by the scientist, who takes an objective stance on the behaviors and relationships he or she observes within a system, conjecturing about the causes and effects of certain changes or stresses upon it.

A landscape, on the other hand, necessarily implies a point of view, and not an objective one, at that. The need for real data and concrete facts to aid writing programs in developing best practices that meet the needs of certain communities can still be acknowledged and met if an institution (or a department) deigns to investigate its literacy landscape, or to create an institutional literacy map (descriptive or visual) that describes its place on that landscape in depth and detail. For an institution, or an institutional actor, taking on the lens of the literacy landscape means that the institution must explicitly attempt to account for and imagine the influences of the various other institutions and environments on the literacy development of students who matriculate into its particular writing program.

Unlike the imagined ecosystem lens, which could too easily allow the institutional viewpoint to be its standard, the literacy landscape lens prefigures a respect and a need for the diverse views of myriad stakeholders on the subjects of identity, place, language, literacy, writing, and writing instruction. A comprehensive portrait of the literacy landscape—such as that offered by Goldblatt in *Because We Live Here*, whose work I am now calling by this new name—not only uses statistical measures to describe the many sites of literacy instruction that feed into a particular writing program, but it also narrates those sites, examines the various philosophies, regulations, and political constraints that affect pedagogy at those sites, and chronicles the relationships among writing program administrators, community literacy activists, public and private school educators, and others. Attention must be paid

to local conditions; writing programs should attempt to look primarily at the places from which most students come, paying special attention to the conditions in the communities of minority and other historically underrepresented students. Indeed, the development of an institutional literacy landscape portrait would represent an important step toward creating curricula that truly fit a writing program's environments.

Furthermore, the literacy landscape lens embraces Guerra's ever important notion of the "critical practice of transcultural repositioning":

an everchanging set of rhetorical abilities that the disenfranchised are more likely to have at their disposal, one that they must learn to regulate self-consciously and that allows them to move back and forth more effectively between and across "different languages and dialects, different social classes, different cultural and artistic forms, different ways of seeing and thinking about the increasingly fluid and hybridized world emerging all around us." ("Cultivating Transcultural Citizenship in a Discursive Democracy" 1)

As a landscape, and not an ecosystem, the literacy landscape is flexible to be described by the same individuals in different ways, at different times, to change according to experience, necessity, and vantage point. It is also flexible to be described by different people or institutions at the same time, in different ways, with equal relevance. Because it deliberately lacks concrete objectivity, the literacy landscape invites and values changes in points of view. Naturally, students and community members will have different impressions of the literacy landscapes and environments from which they come than the institution would paint from its vantage. The more that an institution—or a researcher, or a teacher—does to discover and represent, or better yet, to allow others to represent their own impressions of the landscape, the more useful the growing portrait becomes for tailoring a responsive writing program.

## Turning the Literacy Landscape Lens Inward: Re-locating the Classroom

Writing across communities, conceived and slowly implemented at UNM, acknowledges the difficulties that teachers face in teaching diverse student populations. As Kells notes, the diversity in student backgrounds and educational preparation at UNM is one of the greatest challenges that teachers and students alike face—teachers because they may be unaware of the challenges faced by rural and historically marginalized students in coming to the university setting, and students because they enter into the academy with no real understanding of expectations or requirements, and may not encounter teachers with the knowledge to guide them sensitively through the convoluted place that is higher education. "The distinguishing feature of the Writing Across Communities model is our integrated focus on student diversity and the overall cultural ecology of our regional environment" (Kells 89).

Guerra, commenting on Kells's development of the WAC 2.0 concept, also emphasizes the need for a focus on local conditions in helping students to develop as *transcultural citizens*:

Educators must signal and privilege our students' local communities as they signal and privilege the influences of globalization on them. . . . [T]he notion of transcultural citizenship provides a more effective way [than global citizenship] for educators to remind our students—especially students from historically marginalized communities—that they can and should make use of the prior knowledge and experiences they have accumulated and the rhetorical agility they have developed in the course of negotiating their way across the various communities of practice to which they currently belong, have

belonged in the past, and will belong in the future. (“Cultivating Transcultural Citizenship: A Writing Across Communities Approach” 299)

In order to do this, we must first *ask* our students to think about and discuss their prior experiences, to look critically at their communities of practice, their understandings of their own language and literacy development—and we must also think about where our students want to go in their academic, personal, and professional lives. We must invite both their pasts and their imagined futures into the classroom, and help our students understand how writing fits into their present and future lives—and how their past experiences with writing, language, education, and place can and do inform their present writing selves.

While I present here the assignments that grew out of my own application of the literacy landscape lens within the constraints of a particular program, I hope that the literacy landscape itself, and not these assignments necessarily, will help those who find themselves similarly unsatisfied with received methods of composition instruction, who desire to teach writing in new and creative ways to students whose backgrounds and histories they may not share or understand or to marginalized students whose experience they desire to validate but are unsure where to begin. A shift in pedagogical perspective, a commitment to viewing literacy as spatially and materially constrained, necessitates the development of new curricular practices that value the landscape in which each particular writing classroom situated.

In my own classroom, which was influenced by the required genre-based approach, the imagined literacy landscape was my starting point for discussions about place, identity, language, and literacy. On the first day, I asked my students to answer the question “How did you get here, today?” in a brief homework assignment. Later, as they shared their thoughts in class, they realized how complex this question is, and how many dimensions it has. Some described a single day, narrating their actions from waking until arriving in my afternoon course. Others discussed how they had previously failed the course and had to retake it in order to graduate or take other required courses. Still others narrated their move to the university from more distant places—Illinois, China, Mexico. Some talked about the need to improve their writing skills for a job. I expanded this discussion about the metaphorical and multiple dimensions of the initial question with a “literacy map” assignment, in which students investigated their discourse communities and practices, their uses of language, and the connections of their use of language to both identity and place. Each student constructed a map that depicted information about their discursive practices and communicative genres and strategies, as well as some sort of geographical anchor.

I chose the medium of the map because of its inherent contradictions; as Kent Ryden notes in *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, “the modern map is a marvel of efficient geographical communication, though, in other important ways it does not tell us very much at all” (20). Maps, especially modern maps, are inherently problematic, Ryden argues, because they compress “the landscape’s ambiguities into an arbitrary and simplified flatness. . . . [S]o too does [the map] depopulate the land, removing from it any vestige of life and movement and history” (22). But this ability to compress and summarize information—maps are “probably one of the most densely packed communications media of any sort” (Ryden 20)—also invites inquiry, discussion, and imagination. It is the contradiction between the flattening of the world and maps’ ability to call forth the imagination that makes them such a rich medium for instruction, especially in writing. “Maps may be inadequate in themselves to express human life, they may resist poetry, but nevertheless they can inspire imagination, emotion, and words. . . . [They] possess the power to summon up a deeply human response, appealing irresistibly to memory and creativity and dreams, connecting intimately with people’s minds and lives” (Ryden 22, 23). Ryden notes that it is only in recent history, with the use of the most modern technology, that maps have been accurate enough (in their geologic and geographic

descriptions) to move away from being representations of worldviews and ideological stances in a particular locale. While modern maps may be compilations and dense summaries of information derived from satellite images and photography, if we engage our students in creating their *own* maps, we can invite them to think about place—and language, identity, literacy, history—in ways that encourage them to represent and substantiate their own worldviews, ideologies, prior knowledge, and experiences. Mapping helps students to think ecologically, about the relationships between identity, language, and places, and it also helps them to create meaning from their past experiences, while imagining and simultaneously constructing connections between the academic space of the classroom and their home places.

The literacy map helped my students bring their experiences into the classroom from the beginning, but it also challenged them to think about how they could present information in new and interesting ways. Because of the genre-based curriculum approach in my department, I approached the map as a genre assignment, and the class focused not only on the content of the map—their discourse communities, language, identities—but on its form, what makes a map a map, what features were inherent or optional, and the purposes toward which maps can be put. Students identified four of their discourse communities, delineated where in space and time those communities existed, and described their features, members, and genres of communication.

In this assignment, a focus on discourse was paramount, since “discourses are ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes” (Gee 7). Excerpts from Bradford J. Hall’s *Intercultural Communication* textbook helped contextualize readings by Gloria Anzaldúa and Michelle Cliff.[\[6\]](#) We discussed these authors’ struggles straddling different worlds, and many of my students, though they especially struggled with the changes in language and dialect in Anzaldúa’s work, understood these authors’ frustrations and struggles as arising out of the (dis) connections between language, identity, and place. Through additional conversations on genre, discourse communities, and the readings, my students understood that literacy is not monolithic but community- and situation-based, and also includes behaviors and other symbolic, non-verbal means of communication. They began to understand that communication is such a complex array of context, expectations, and genre and behavior considerations that, as Bakhtin described, “many people who have an excellent command of language often feel quite helpless in certain spheres of communication precisely because they do not have a practical command of the generic forms used in the given spheres” (80).

For the second assignment, I asked students to think of a time when their literacy or lack thereof in a particular discourse community either caused a problem or helped them to solve one. They wrote a letter to a person of their choice, explaining the situation. In class, we worked on the genre conventions of different types of letters—business letters, complaint letters, personal letters, and open letters. Through peer review and drafting, students articulated the ways in which their letters did and didn’t match the audiences they had specified, as well as confronted the bounds of literacies that had led to the often uncomfortable, sometimes comedic situations they described. Students also had the option of choosing a different genre if they could justify that it was more appropriate. Two students did this: one wrote a movie review; the other created a children’s book. For their portfolio revisions, these students chose to re-write their original assignments as letters, using the formatting and styles we had discussed during the sequence, effectively changing the genre and audience in order to address the same topic in a completely different rhetorical situation.

In their final assignment, students created profiles of individuals either teaching or working in their chosen major or desired field. Their audience was defined for them as members of the UNM community, who would hypothetically access their profile through the existing “Writing Across

Communities” website. Students analyzed the website and discussed the UNM community as audience. We read and analyzed a variety of profiles taken from magazines and local and national newspapers. Students practiced interviewing skills and writing interview questions in class. They created mini-profiles based on published twenty-questions-type interviews, so they could learn to move from interview format to profile. Finally, students interviewed their subjects about their writing practices. I reminded my students that they had gained specialized knowledge of terms like “discourse community” and “writing genres” and “genre features” and that they might have to translate these ideas into more neutral language for their interviewees. Students interviewed professionals from research psychiatrists to doctors to lawyers to professors in biology, engineering, and psychology, as well as practicing nurses and jewelry makers.

Students reported that they learned much about writing in their chosen field that they otherwise would not have known. I had included the profile sequence at the end of the semester for a number of reasons: 1) to give my students a chance to do empirical research (a component of the first-semester curriculum at UNM), 2) to complete the arc that I saw in the semester—moving my students from a new awareness of their home literacies and discourse practices toward a better understanding of the professional communities they were striving toward, and 3) to give them practice at critically applying the knowledge and terms that we had created through our class discussions and readings. Each of my assignments addressed the requirements of the genre-based curriculum, as well as meeting the learning outcomes stipulated by the program. Additionally, the students gained facility with terms and ideas that had previously been either unfamiliar or simply not examined: literacy, place, environment, discourse, discourse communities, communicative genres, writing genres, features of communication. Most importantly, though, I worked to validate students’ experience and knowledge by integrating their own learning incomes into the content and substance of the course; I encouraged their academic and professional aspirations by incorporating them into the curriculum; and I helped them to see themselves as people who can, do, and will write in a variety of worlds.

Given the chance, I would extend these assignments with more challenging readings, more time to thoroughly discuss students’ home communities and literacies in a safe classroom environment, and less formal attention to the minute details of genre, while paying more attention to the power relationships and ideologies that genres engender. The classroom experience of our students is of paramount importance, and it is only through systematic conceptual reorganization and conscientious reimaging that we can begin to change the paradigms that govern literacy education—even in our own instruction. Writing across the curriculum, the genre-based curriculum approach, ecomposition, and WAC 2.0 have all made extraordinary contributions to the burgeoning paradigm shift. Viewing the world of composition studies through the lens of the literacy landscape helps to join their contributions to literacy instruction with the students’ need to represent and critically examine themselves and their own worldviews.

## Turning the Literacy Landscape Lens Outward: Re-viewing Student Literacies

In his 1996 *Changing Our Minds: Negotiating English and Literacy*, Miles Myers noted that changes occurring in “content standards” and definitions of “minimum literacy . . . have far-reaching effects on how English is defined” (xi). While mostly concerned with standards that define minimum literacy and that govern literacy education in K-12 education, Myers’s observations are nonetheless relevant to the discussion that plagues basic writing and first-year writing programs, especially at public institutions like UNM that draw their populations almost entirely from pools of public-school educated students whose educational history has been governed by the language and tides of standards -based education. We must therefore operate with a “multiliteracy awareness” (Myers xii), acknowledging that “students bring to the classroom the history of various forms of literacy; thus they

bring to English classes various assumptions about English as an activity in school” (xiv), as well as assumptions about language for communication in other forums.

As their teachers, we too bring our own assumptions about literacy and English as an activity in school, as well as our own linguistic, pedagogical, and personal biases. In order to understand the first-year writing classroom as the site of literacy education, we need to remember the many arenas in which students use and extend their literacy skills—we need to understand their literacy landscape and how our classroom sits within it. Guerra has argued that as educators, we must “coordinate our efforts across school grades” to “create an environment in which children across the K-16 spectrum can combine in very sophisticated ways the cultural and linguistic resources they bring to school with those they learn in our classrooms, ultimately moving more effectively across the cultural spaces that too often separate us from one another” (304), and perhaps also revising the role that first-year composition plays as gatekeeper in excluding marginalized students from further progress in academia (Binkley and Smith). It is clear, with theories like FoK and a national conversation urging us to “get rid of the deficit model [and] leverage what they [students] bring to the table,”<sup>{7} [#note7]</sup> taking hold in K-12 education, and WAC 2.0’s and ecocomposition’s more specific manifestations gaining traction in composition, that educators across the K-16 spectrum are ready to acknowledge and incorporate spatial and material realities into teaching. In higher education especially, we must remember that students already have extensive literacy and life histories; whatever their academic writing skills, they surely have communication and other life skills from which they will draw and from which we can draw to help them navigate the world of academia.

As we move toward a more spatially and materially aware paradigm, we need a macro-model of literacy and of place that allows us to begin again from an understanding of the cultural and human ecology in which we all operate. For this reason, I have proposed the metaphor of the literacy landscape not only to guide empirical studies of literacy education but also to influence curricular development, the administrative practices of institutions, and our relationships to the communities that send students into our writing programs. As Guerra wisely reminds us, “any models and approaches we conceive have inherent limitations” (“Cultivating Transcultural Citizenship: A Writing Across Communities Model” 304), and all of the models discussed herein also have their inherent strengths. It is imperative that writing be conceived within the academy as belonging to all disciplines, as a writing across the curriculum approach advocates; likewise, it is inconceivable that writing be taught without the use of genre—be it implicated consciously or unconsciously; and ecocomposition’s insistence on the ecology of writing draws educators’ and students’ attention alike to the web of relationships spun by words. Nevertheless, composition studies would benefit from a lens that can simultaneously be adopted by administrators, instructors, and students in a common quest toward an appreciation of the material realities—and their social, economic, cultural, and historical antecedents—that shape and constrain writing and writing instruction.

Together, we need to see institutions, communities, and individuals as situated within a metaphorical and literal landscape, their distances from one another determined not only by physical location but also by economic and natural resources, educational paradigms, ideologies, culture, and history. We need to value the unique views within this literacy landscape, to investigate the divergent views from particular points within it, to imagine how curricular changes at the university or community college level might impact other locations within it. We need to think of the literacy landscape itself as integrated into our students’ understandings of the world. We need to see the university writing program as a particular site on a particular landscape, and we need to consider the many, many paths our students traverse through diverse environs in order to arrive in our classrooms. Most importantly, however, once our students are in those classrooms, the lens of the literacy landscape can help instructors toward a more integrated view of their students’ academic and personal lives, as well as their historical, social, and cultural identities, a view that will allow instructors to consciously

encourage students to explore that landscape, and to make for themselves the important connections between their home places and the academy that they will (also) come to inhabit.

## Notes

1. Closer to the hearts of many composition instructors, the topic of August 13, 2012's *New York Times* "Room for Debate" blog asks with tongue in cheek, "Is Our Children Learning Enough Grammar to Get Hired?" inviting debaters to discuss whether job candidates should be considered if their materials evidence poor grammar. ([Return to text.](#)) [[#note1-ref](#)]
2. I must thank my colleague Genesea Carter for introducing me to this trend and to resources in education, as discussed in her dissertation chapter "How Alice's Topsy-Turvy Perceptions of Reality Can Encourage the Composition Classroom as a Funds of Knowledge Third Space" (unpublished). According to Linda Hogg, "the term was originally coined by [Eric R.] Wolf (1966 [*Peasants*]) to define resources and knowledge that households manipulate to make ends meet in the household economy" and was included among such funds as "caloric funds, funds for rent, replacement funds, ceremonial funds, and social funds" (667). However, the term has been mobilized by researchers studying Mexican and Mexican immigrant families living in the U.S. and Mexico, especially anthropologist Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez and also Luis C. Moll, to describe the intellectual resources, skills, and abilities brought to bear by both households and communities on solving problems, maintaining social relations, and navigating changing social and economic situations. ([Return to text.](#)) [[#note2-ref](#)]
3. As Mike Rose notes in "The Language of Exclusion," we must abandon the remedial metaphor of instruction in favor of a "rich model of written language development and production" (600), if we are to move beyond this damaging language. Nevertheless, even those who argue against the usefulness of "remedial" education still revert to medical language to make their case; see, for example, Judith Scott-Clayton's *New York Times* "Economix" blog about ostensibly prepared students having to enter remedial classes. ([Return to text.](#)) [[#note3-ref](#)]
4. Mortensen is here summarizing the advice that he takes from Lisa Ede's *Situating Composition* and in context suggesting that the field needs to heed this advice carefully. ([Return to text.](#)) [[#note4-ref](#)]
5. I am indebted to Dan Cryer for his insight on this, as well as for sharing his own approach to teaching genre through a narrative lens, and for pointing me toward Carolyn Miller's excellent article "Genre as Social Action." ([Return to text.](#)) [[#note5-ref](#)]
6. Anzaldúa's "Tlilli Tlapalli: The Path of the Red and Black Ink," and "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (both chapters from *Borderlands: The New Mestiza* which have been widely anthologized) each discuss issues of language insecurity as Anzaldúa moves between different linguistic and cultural communities. Cliff's essay "A Journey Into Speech" discusses the ways in which learning to write in an academically accepted discourse changed her understanding of herself and her ancestry, as well as her ability to write in her own voice. I used the versions of these essays printed in the *Graywolf Annual Five: Multicultural Literacy*, edited by Rick Simonson and Scott Walker (St. Paul, MN: Graywolf, 1988). For other takes on a mapping/writing assignment, see: 1) Hothem's "Suburban Studies," which describes a semester's curriculum beginning with a personal mapping assignment, and 2) Bill Wolff's "vrmcs12 mapping project" assignment, in which Wolff asks students to compose maps that tell a story as part of his Composing Spaces course at Rowan University. ([Return to text.](#)) [[#note6-ref](#)]
7. This remark comes from principal Claudia Auguirre, a guest on the "What's in a ZIP Code: A Look at Inequality across Our Public Schools" panel of the *Education Nation* forum; Pedro Noguera of New York University, made the crucial connection between home conditions and education even more explicit: "Poor kids come to school with unmet needs. We compound

inequities at home by not addressing inequities at school. Poverty is not a learning disability.” [\(Return to text.\)](#) [#note7-ref]

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